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# Another Study Explains Why You Can't Find Your Car Keys

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# *The University of Dayton*

## *News Release*

Oct. 13, 1992

Contact: Rosemary Harty

### **ANOTHER STUDY EXPLAINS WHY YOU CAN'T FIND YOUR CAR KEYS**

DAYTON, Ohio -- In a test of ability and aging, older people worked just as well on motor tasks but made more mistakes than younger people on work that required memory.

The findings of an experiment at the University of Dayton, to be presented this month at the Human Factors Society in Atlanta, suggest that companies may need to tailor work conditions to boost the performance of older workers — aids such as a software program that keeps directions up on the corner of a computer screen.

"The demographics of our country are changing, and older individuals are continuing to remain in the work force longer," said Thomas Eggemeier, professor of psychology and a co-author of the study. "As we grow older there is a slowing of our responses under certain task situations."

Two groups of 12 subjects participated in the study: one with an average age of 23, the second averaging 65 years old. They took part in one test that required them to manipulate a cursor on a screen, testing psychomotor skills, and a second which tested short-term memory by requiring the subjects to remember numbers on a computer screen.

Investigators found almost no difference in the psychomotor test. However, older workers made more errors, while reporting they were working harder, at the memory task.

"One message of the study is that if you're designing systems that older workers will use, you should be somewhat concerned about providing a support system when memory is an important part of the job they're doing," Eggemeier said.

Douglas L. Boyer, a graduate student in psychology, and Jay G. Pollack, a researcher in aerospace mechanics at the University of Dayton Research Institute, also worked on the study.

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